IN THE CLAIMS

Please rewrite the claims to read as follows:

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9. A process for the production of plants with improved growth characteristics, which comprises the following steps:

a) transfer and integration of a DNA sequence coding for a prokaryotic asparagine synthetase in the plant genome;
wherein said DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA sequence and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplast or plastids of a plant cell and
wherein said plant cell exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids;

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b) transfer and integration of a chloroplastic glutamine synthetase gene or a portion threof into the plant genome which encodes and expresses an anti-sense RNA of said gene
wherein the DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the transcription of said DNA sequence and

c) regeneration of intact and fertile plants from the transformed cells.

11. A plant cell obtainable by a method as claimed in claim 9, wherein a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids and which contains a gene construct which provides a reduced level of expression of endogenous chloroplastic glutamine synthetase activity.

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Sub D 2

sub D3

12. A plant, seeds, propagule or propagation material containing cells according to claim 11.

13. A gene construct comprising a gene encoding a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase operatively linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said gene and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids.

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14. A gene construct according to claim 13, wherein the asparagine synthetase gene is an E. coli asparagine synthetase gene with a chloroplasic leader peptide at its N-terminus and which leader peptide is a modified transit peptide form the small subunit of the Ribulosebisphosphat carboxylase from pea containing a duplication of 20 amino acids compared to the natural transit peptide.

15. A vector containing a gene construct according to claim 14 which gene construct comprises a sequence which encodes a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus and which leader peptide is a modified transit peptide form the small subunit of the Ribulosebisphosphat carboxylase from pea containing a duplication of 20 amino acids compared to the natural transit peptide.

16. A plant cell transformed with the gene construct according to claim 13 or with vector according to claim 15.

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.17(a) and 1.136(a), a three-month extension of time, from **April 17, 2001**, up to and including to **July 17, 2001,** to respond to the January 17, 2001 Office Action (Final Rejection). Enclosed herewith is a check in